

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 GUATEM 04860 081306Z

53

ACTION ARA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2269

INFO AMCONSUL BELIZE

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MEXICO

AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR

AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

AMEMBASSY MANAGUA

AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

C O N F I D E N T I A L GUATEMALA 4860

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PBOR GT UK BH

SUBJECT: BELIZE: UK-GUATEMALA NEGOTIATIONS

REF: STATE 157065

1. FOLLOWING HIS RETURN FROM PARTICIPATION IN MOST RECENT NEGOTIATIONS WITH UK IN NEW YORK, AND STOPOVERS IN WASHINGTON AND NASSAU, BRIG. GEN. RENE MENDOZA TOLD EMBOFF JULY 6 THAT TALKS HAD GONE WELL AND THAT BOTH HE AND GOG WERE PLEASED WITH PROGRESS MADE AND WITH NEW WILLINGNESS OF THE UK TO COMPROMISE. HE DID NOT VOLUNTEER ANY SPECIFICS OF AGREEMENTS REACHED, ALTHOUGH HE DID CONFIRM IN RESPONSE TO QUESTION THAT QUESTION OF MARITIME BOUNDARY NOT DISCUSSED AND WOULD BE LEFT FOR LATER MINISTERIAL LEVEL DISCUSSIONS, ALONG WITH THE LAND BOUNDARY.

2. TO EMBOFF'S SURPRISE, MENDOZA, ALTHOUGH FORMER COMMANDER OF NAVY, DID NOT APPEAR ATTACH MUCH

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CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 GUATEM 04860 081306Z

IMPORTANCE TO MARITIME BOUNDARY. IN FIRST PLACE, HE

POINTED OUT, GUATEMALA HAD LONG-ESTABLISHED USAGE OF ACCESS TO THE GHI SEAS, AND AS PRACTICAL MATTER WOULD CONTINUE TO HAVE IT REGARDLESS OF OUTCOME OF BELIZE QUESTION. SECOND, IF GUATEMALA OBTAINED EVEN A SMALL TERRITORIAL CESSION FROM BELIZE - WHICH HE WAS CAREFUL TO NOTE ONCE AGAIN WAS AN ESSENTIAL PART OF ANY FINAL SETTLEMENT - RESULTING 12-MILE LIMIT BOUNDARIES WOULD GIVE GUATEMALA GUARANTEED ACCESS. HE GAVE IMPRESSION GOG HAD NOT GIVEN ANY THOUGHT TO SEEKING MARITIME BOUNDARY THAT WOULD GIVE IT GREATER SEA RIGHTS THAN WOULD SIMPLE EXTENSION OF LAND BOUNDARY.

3. MENDOZA'S MOST INTERESTING COMMENT WAS THAT LAUGERUD GOVERNMENT - UNFORTUNATELY, HE SAID, IN LIGHT OF ALL THE OTHER PROBLEMS IT FACES - IS STUCK WITH NECESSITY OF RESOLVING BELIZE ISSUE DURING ITS TERM OF OFFICE (I.E., BEFORE JULY 1978). UNGA RESOLUTION OF 1975 HAD "CHANGED EVERYTHING", HE SAID, AND AS BRITISH OFTEN REMINDED GUATEMALA, PROBLEM COULD NO LONGER BE INDEFINITELY POSTPONED. CLEAR IMPLICATION WAS THAT CURRENT NEGOTIATIONS ARE SERIOUS AND GOG NOT STALLING FOR TIME BUT TRYING TO WORK OUT SETTLEMENT IT CAN LIVE WITH.

4. MOST SERIOUS ASPECT OF BELIZE PROBLEM, MENDOZA SAID, IS NOT NEGOTIATION WITH UK, WHICH IS GOING SO WELL, BUT RATHER THE PART THAT LIES AHEAD, THE SELLING OF THE SETTLEMENT TO CONGRESS AND THE POLITICAL PARTIES. (HE DID NOT MENTION THE MILITARY, BUT THEY ARE ALSO A MAJOR IF NOT THE MAJOR FACTOR.) ANY SETTLEMENT MUST HAVE VIRTUALLY UNANIMOUS SUPPORT; THE GOVERNMENT COULD NOT AFFORD A DIVISIVE, BITTER DEBATE ON THIS ISSUE. SOME STRATEGY WOULD HAVE TO BE FOUND TO SATISFY THE LAWYERS WHO WILL INSIST THAT A CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY MUST BE CALLED TO MODIFY THE GUATEMALAN CONSTITUTION (TO ELIMINATE THE REFERENCE TO BELIZE). A CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY COULD NOT BE LIMITED TO THE BELIZE ISSUE BUT COULD GET INTO OTHER AREAS AND OPEN PANDORA'S BOX. HE NOTED THAT THE PRESIDENT'S APPOINTMENT OF CONGRESSMEN FROM ALL OF THE MAJOR PARTIES TO THE COUNCIL ON BELIZE

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 GUATEM 04860 081306Z

WAS AN EFFORT TO LINE THEM UP IN SUPPORT OF THE EVENTUAL SETTLEMENT.

5. COMMENT: WE BELIEVE THE DECISION WHETHER TO PUT A BELIZE TREATY BEFORE CONGRESS IN THIS ADMINISTRATION WILL NOT BE MADE UNTIL THE PACKAGE IS COMPLETE, AND ALMOST CERTAINLY NOT AT ALL IF THE PACKAGE DOES NOT CONTAIN LAUGERUD'S "SMALL SLICE" OF TERRITORY. BUT

THIS CONVERSATION IS THE FIRST IN WHICH WE HAVE HEARD
A KNOWLEDGEABLE GOG OFFICIAL DISCUSS A STEP AS APPARENTLY
FAR DOWN THE LINE AS RATIFICATION OF THE TREATY BY CONGRESS.
ANDREWS

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